

Dear Tania,

1.

Feb. 1989

I have much to say to you. I probably won't give this to you but maybe writing these thoughts down will at least release them from my spinning brain and perhaps organize and clear them for me.

I know that you're angry with me. You think I'm dishonest about and denying the truth about how I feel, what happened in the past, about your illness.

Perhaps you are right. I have denied some things - some I just truly feel differently about. I've been afraid to talk to you about how I feel. I'm afraid I'll hurt you in some way or you'll hate me or I will run off again. Feelings aren't rational and shame sometimes clouds my vision.

But, I really would like to share my heart and my feelings with you.

Denial - yes I have wanted in my heart to deny any idea that you could have been sexually abused by us. I say us because Tania, I believe that I am also responsible. That period of your

life (the last half of fifth grade or so I think) and what happened to you was not, as your father said premeditated — but, it was a result, in part, of conscious decisions on our part. Decisions made when you were a baby, a toddler, & a small child. Decisions to raise you differently and more lovingly (we thought). We were very influenced with the attitude of the late 60's & 70's idea of closeness and touching with each other and our children. This new sort of openness we thought was healthy. We

Tania I was there when Dad would rub your back at night, sometimes he would put his hand down into your pants and rub your bottom too. I didn't think there was anything wrong with that. When he started to travel again and we thought he was losing his closeness with you, we didn't recognize it as necessary pre-adolescent behavior for a fifth grade girl. Instead we felt he needed to be extra loving. Especially when he came home from being gone a while and and he was passing you about manners. The quiet, loving,

(I thought) times ³ at bedtime were good. I came in once and saw Dad playing beside you & joined the two of you. I thought we were having a loving family time. Or, Dad would come out and say how he thought it was nice and close. Then it wasn't ⁴ so long before you said no — you wanted me to put you to bed. He would come out & say 'She doesn't want me or you'd say goodnight quickly. I thought you were mad (as I was sometimes) at him for hassling you about table manners. You would take a long time to say goodnight to me — with 20 kisses or more. At first I was concerned about this and then I thought it was just your new stalling tactic — you never wanted to go to bed.

Trying to help bring the closeness back, I then suggested you go out to dinner or something a couple times a month. I also suggested he talk to you about sex from the male perspective. He was reluctant and felt awkward about it but I felt it would be helpful to you.

4.

Unfortunately, during this time Dad and I were also having some difficulties. At least I was as so he got sucked into it. You got in the middle of this crossfire at different times.

How confusing and frightening for you! How could we have been so stupid and selfish and yes abusive!

I cringe at the words, sexual abuse. Hell, I took you to self defense class to protect you from just that.

I am filled with shame and grief. It doesn't matter that the intent was not to hurt you — you were hurt and scared. You did not deserve or ask for this injury to you. You were and are our innocent child.

When you told me about your talk the other day, my shame and fear were what spoke to you. You have a right to share your life and help yourself to heal in any way you feel is necessary to you. I'm sure you did a good job, even tho it must have been scary for you. Forgive me for spoiling it for you afterwards.

5

I support you, contrary to what you might think, in your AA. and any other efforts you think could help you. I only wanted to add that someday with the help of God and, or, modern medical research, someday a cure for this illness.

I have over the past three years hated, and, or felt sorry for and loved you Dad at different times. I have sometimes wondered why he hasn't hated me for mine. I have sometimes wondered how we could go on together. Then I remember —

1. I have been also responsible for your pain
2. I made a decision many years ago to love him — for better or worse. Also, very important, I cannot live in a world without forgiveness. I want to forgive him, just as I want him to forgive me. At the age of 53, I have needed forgiveness many times. The most difficult part, is to somehow be able to forgive myself.

Tania, as you heal and grow, I pray that someday you will be able to forgive us. Forgiving is not the same as forgetting. But I hope that for you

(at least this has been my experience)
the memories and the pain will become
less intense and more distant. That the
richness of your life will bring good memories
to dwell on.

Lovingly
Mom